

MEETING

WITH: O.E.O. Representatives, the BORICUA COMMITTEE and Representatives from Paterson Task Force

DATE: August 25, 1970 - 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: 351 Market Street, Paterson, N.J.

PRESENT WERE: Mr. Angel Rivera, Regional Director - O.E.O.
Miss Blanca Gonzalez, O.E.O. Regional Office
Mr. Pulakos, O.E.O. Regional Office
Mr. Frederick D. Wilkes, Executive Director - Paterson Task Force
Mr. Arthur Diaz, Deputy Director - Paterson Task Force
Mrs. Gist, Mr. Curtis, Mr. Benson, Mrs. H. GLbbs and two others -
(all members of the Board of Directors - P.T.F.)
Mr. Amilcar Velez - Boricua Committee
Mr. Juan Torres - Boricua Committee
Mr. Pablo Santana - Boricua Committee
Mr. Ralph Soria - Boricua Committee
Mr. Edwin Morales - Boricua Committee

Mr. Rivera: We have some considerations and recommendations regarding the Paterson Task Force, represented by Mr. Wilkes and his group and members of the Board, again bringing out the considerations and recommendations by the Puerto Rican Community there. I think we can come to some kind of resolution if we can start dealing with this and try to work out some kind of a compromise situation where we can start building a much closer community effort in dealing with the poverty program out here.

I think we can discuss specifically the issues of trying to develop some kind of a vehicle and again, the express thought was possibly some kind of delegate agency, set up some kind of mechanism in that order, and come in and correct me when you think I am going off base.

I am thinking in terms of the general thrust under this administration which totally has been to see if we can come up with a more effective program by means of decentralizing a lot of our efforts in getting out into the target areas of our poverty community. I think that this consideration of possibly developing a vehicle that will deal with a Puerto Rican Community effort in a poverty community can be dealt with, and I think it is not unreasonable and I think we can all deal with that. Another consideration is - let's look at our Board in the Paterson Task Force. Let's see if we can get possibly better participation, more participation, by the total poverty community in Paterson in expressing and exercising our feelings on that, and again, after the meeting with both groups here, I don't think we are really very far apart on this. I think this is something we can adjust ourselves to and something you can adjust yourselves to, and resolve that, dealing with the staffing pattern in the Paterson Task Force again, to effect the relationship in the Task Force that represents the constituency we are dealing with, I think, again, we are not very far apart.

I am saying that these are more or less the highlights on this. There have been allegations that have been raised that we can deal with at the Regional Office. I think that is the proper place to deal with them. I think that now that we are here I would like to see the groups involved deal with these top priority issues, and let's resolve them, as we have our community out there and some people, as I understand it, are waiting to be paid - today is pay-day. The whole exercise here in Paterson was to develop a situation where we would get down to the nitty gritty and start talking about these things and let's start negotiating these things to

come up with a resolution. This has been effected and I would like to think that the parties involved here now, can deal with this so that we can allay the fears of the people in the street now, where this exercise, which I think is an exercise in community action, does not turn into an exercise where we have some kind of funny situation where a lot of people can get hurt. I think that the responsibility lays heavily on the people in this room. I think we have people of intelligence and people of leadership value in the Paterson community here, and I think we have people of good faith who are not far apart and who can resolve this.

Let me just say this and then we should start discussing -it should be discussed back and forth-. I came out here today because I think it is important that the programs that are running in the community where we are having this program..... These programs are so vital and so critical that I feel it is important that someone like myself and the regional director of these programs in this Area -in this Region- it is important that they come out and start talking around the issues that really pertain to our community. What we don't want to see (unintelligible) I know, after speaking with both groups, they were both aware that things may go much beyond than the Black and Puerto Rican tensions in Paterson. It is something that we have to learn to deal with in an intelligent manner, because the programs that are affecting this region, the majority programs, specifically dealing with our communities and we know it won't do any good in the poverty community that we try to serve, if we can't get together and deal with things intelligently, with great rational and great compromise.

When I go to Washington and we talk about poverty my expression is: "This is the toughest ball game that is played in this country, probably the first time in the history of the world that is has been tried." There are no miracles in this thing. There aren't any great bag of tricks that would solve problems easily. It takes a hell of a lot of good faith. It takes a lot of open negotiations where there is no hidden agenda and where we start talking about everything that hurts and start trying dealing with that. As I mentioned before the priority items that we need to discuss today are things that people are saying: "man, it can't be done", because whatever something, I think we can deal with it. I think we can have the (unintelligible) here. I leave it with you now - to go back and forth.

Mrs. Jessie Gist: I would like to know what this is all about before the meeting starts if that is okay.

Mr. Wilkes: Well, I leave it to the Committee, you ask the Board members.

Mr. Torres: I think we should leave it to the Board members only because they are the ones who have the power. (This statement was made because there were present some people who did not belong to the Board or the Boricua Committee).

Mr. Diaz: The only thing I have to say is just what the people have to say. I have nothing to say on my own, but just the consensus of what the people say, and the only agreement that is going to be taken here today as far as what the people say, and I have to say what the people say because I know my skin is in danger, okay? Now, they say that they do not want to deal with the Paterson Task Force in

no kind of way, in no kind of way as far as delegate agency, they don't want to deal in no other business way. They either have their share apart in a separate agency or they either don't want their Puerto Rican names to be mentioned in the papers, neither in budgets, neither in nothing. And then, we can clear with all of you that if we know, or the Puerto Rican community knows, that the Paterson Task Force is using the Puerto Rican expression in papers, in proposals or in budgets, to receive money, then we are going to go to Court, because we do not want to deal at all with the Paterson Task Force. That is the consensus of the community.

Mr. Rivera: I can only mention that within the Act we deal with CAP agencies, that is, the CAP Agency in the community. By the Act we deal within the Agency. Now, I expressed this with Torres and the other gentlemen before, when we had the other meeting, indicating that one of the negotiations we have to deal with from the gallery of the Act that deals with the poverty program, since that is not an act that can be taken, it is not an action I can take. The alternative of that was to effectuate a program out of a situation that will deal with our poverty community in the Puerto Rican segments in Paterson. We can deal with that possibility, and we have been dealing with that since the delegated agencies started. That is reasonable and feasible. Now, what is not feasible is another CAP Agency. That isn't real and that is where we stand.

Mr. Diaz: As I said, and I will tell you again what they say -they base that on this situation- they say that SAFE is a delegate agency of the Paterson Task Force

that represents the CASA program. They have demanded, and they will put that in black and white before a lawyer, that last year, in the refunding year, the delegate agency sent to the Paterson Task Force a Proposal; it was sent to the OEO Office, the same way it was sent to the CAP Agency, okay? Now they have come to the conclusion that if they are to become a delegate agency of the Paterson Task Force they have to submit the Proposal through the same channel and they will have the same problem. Now, this is the situation: They don't want to deal with no second Board of Directors. If this is a matter of money to be sent by Paterson Task Force it is perfectly alright with them, but if it is a matter they have to submit proposals to Paterson Task Force Board of Directors, and the Paterson Task Force Board of Directors have to submit them to OEO, they don't want to deal with that kind of deal again.

Mr. Rivera: I can only deal with, again, what is within my authorization. We can't deal with modification of the Act, and let's start implementing around that to come out with the end results. You cannot talk of the mechanics of having a separate CAP. That is not real, because that cannot be done. What can be done is what we mentioned before when we talked about the process of getting a grant through when you are a delegate agency. I think that all was spent out in this kind of negotiation, because obviously if there is an allegation of something wrong, let's correct that. I do not think that is unreasonable.

Mr. Wilkes: I would like to get clarified the fact that a lot of monies available for the delegate agency, Regional has knowledge of how much money a delegate agency is going to receive. And so if the CAP is going drastically to increase that amount

of money for the delegate agency they have to get the Regional approval. If they are going to reduce, they have to get the Regional approval. Later on the issue on the.....you are talking about CASA program. I think the issue in fact was that they wanted a \$90,000 budget and they got a \$60,000 budget.

Mr. Pulakos: If I am not mistaken , a \$90,000 budget was submitted to us and we knocked it down to \$60,000.

Mr. Rivera: Now that we are here, and we have some kind of decision making body, at-least commitment body here, let's deal with what can affect and change the situation. This is what all this is about. I think we can deal with that. Anything else may be smoke and we do not have that much time. I don't want to see people get hurt unnecessarily in this thing, because today is one of those good days, is pay-day as I understand. A very interesting situation. I want us to deal with that because sitting in this room are people who have great concern for people out there in the street. Let's get to the issues and start resolving them. If we strike out as a body it means that we are less responsible than we think and then we have to do something else and people will have to do another thing, but I really think we can pull this one off because I can see that we have the ground rules and we have some kind of guide-lines, and we have some kind of good intentions, because I met with both groups and I think, as they said, the three priority issues we can deal with them because it is not unreasonable. There are always answers, but there are answers and the answers should come from the community, Black and Puerto Rican, sitting together and negotiating. If we cannot do that, you know, it is a hell of a time. Maybe we should not be in this program, you know. It is tough. We are

supposed to be tough people, so let's deal with it with the notion we are not going to win everything. Let's get into it and begin to bring it up. We can't deal with a separate CAP. We can deal with the reality of a delegate agency, one that can function in the poverty area with dignity and intelligence.

Mr. Diaz: When you mention members of the negotiating committee that were here (I was not here before) they mentioned also a delegate agency, but people do not understand quite clear what you mean when you say delegate agency, because as I mentioned, now SAFE represents CASA and CASA is facing the same kind of problem. They say if we are going to have the same kind of problem CASA Program is having, we do not want to be part of it. We want to be out completely.

Mrs. Gist: What kind of a problem has it?

Mr. Diaz: As I mentioned, they claim that last year.....

Mr. Wilkes: Hold, hold, we dealt with that. So, what the situation was? A money matter and the way that money matters stand (unintelligible)....if we are to negotiate, to take this.....and the answers have been given.

Mrs. Gist: Evidently, the people are not getting clear explanations to their questions in the community and if the leaders of the community are not giving straight answers to people in that community we cannot be held responsible.

Mr. Diaz: Well, there are here members of CASA Board and they can talk about that.

Mr. Wilkes: The problem of CASA Program is symptomatic of the ills in the relationship with the Paterson Task Force. My understanding is that we sat down with them, but we were far apart in the first meeting. We were negotiating in good faith. If we came out with some kind of contract or negotiation, we were well satisfied with those contracts and negotiations. It is my understanding that will be the same experiment. Casa will approach P.T.F. One of the issues is to find out what the realities were, what your desires were, how responsible, where we can then meet your needs. It seems to me that if there are other problems between SAFE and Task Force, they should bring those problems to the P.T.F. If there are other problems that are not involved in the same way, we should sit down and discuss these issues. Then, I can't quite see how we are going to get to the point of working together and say all this thing is all (interruptions).

Mr. Rubiani: Is this issue here on CASA program, or is it to take over issues of the Paterson Task Force that have nothing to do with CASA Program?

Mrs. Gist: I want to know this: He said that people don't want to be identified with Task Force in any capacity because of what has happened at Casa, so that's what I want to know. What happened in Casa so far that people don't want to be associated with Task Force. Only because he brought it in.

Mr. Rubiani: The problem with the CASA Board is that they have \$60,000 to run the program. In order to run the program they are allowed \$60,000. They had to cut one employee off, because they need \$5,000 more to run the program. That is the main issue.

Mr. Wilkes: So, the main issue is money.

Mrs. Gist: And where does the money come from?

Mr. Soria: The money comes from OEO through the Task Force. Let me ask this then. If the money comes to Casa through Task Force and Task Force money comes from OEO, how come Task Force since it is the delegate agency why don't they apply for more money in order for Casa to have more money, when in no time no employee from Task Force would lose his job if they have no money. They get it, don't they? Why cannot the same be done for Casa?

Mrs. Gist: Didn't he just said that the Regional Office cut the Proposal for \$90,000?

Mr. Diaz: Mrs. Gist, that's is precisely what Mr. Soria said, that we don't want to enter in the Casa issue, because if there are questions you can ask Casa people. They said that the Paterson Task Force have never at this point let one employee go because of shortage of money. They always apply for other resources.

Mrs. Gist: We cut down Neighborhood Councils from 10 to 6.

Mr. Wilkes: Of course, because of lack of money.

Mr. Torres: We are not defending Casa. Casa is one of the things we want to see resolved because it is nothing but a refund agency. It is not giving any real pro-

grams in the community and the way I see it Casa is part of P.T.F., not part of the community. So, why we are defending Casa here?

Mr. Soria: These people in that Paterson Task Force down there are aware of what is going on outside. I know there are going to be problems out there. I know it, and I feel it. Let's ask the Board here what are they going to decide about this, and Mr. Wilkes, and the rest. So, what is going to be decided about this? On these demands, requests, or whatever you want to call them. What are you going to decide about this?

Mr. Curtis: The whole thing is a communication problem. People are not disseminating information and that takes in everybody. First of all, I heard that there was a Proposal for \$90,000 and it was cut. Task Force didn't send it in. The Regional Office says it was not sent in. They cut it. Now again, if somebody is using this issue as a fighter to create a problem, I don't know. But I am suggesting that we start and stop and re-evaluate just what has been done. You know. I keep hearing about Black and Puerto Rican. I keep hearing two fences (?). Let's split, let's get apart. We are not getting any other issue. It is money, you know. Nobody is really saying: "help the poor". I keep hearing jobs and money. I don't hear about programs. I don't hear lack of programs. I don't hear any of these. All I hear is money, jobs, authority, power. These are the things I hear. Now, fine, maybe some of this has to be disseminated properly in order to maintain a balance, in order to get things done in the community. Fine! I go along with this. But I keep hearing us arguing and talking, and the arguments against the Task Force. I talked to some

of the people outside the Task Force and they keep going around the same thing. It is money, power, jobs. Nobody is talking about programs, people, the poor. This is not what I read in the papers. I am talking about what the people are saying actually, you know.

Mr. Soris: Can I answer that for you? People are really asking for this because if you don't have employees to make programs, or to deal with the programs that you make, they cannot get to the people and this is one of the main issues also, because if people won't have jobs in there, and there is no personnel to do the work how can they carry the program? How can they reach the people? Can you answer me that? This is the problem.

Mr. Curtis: Yes, I can answer in this way: There is a delegate agency that deals mainly with the Puerto Rican, which is CASA, and I have yet to know myself as a Board member, I cannot say definite, of Casa referring any problems, any situations to Task Force which they cannot handle. Money wise or any other wise. In other words, fine, they need \$6,000 to keep an employee. What about if there were \$6,000 for another program. One which is actually needed. Have they come and said: Look, we don't have the money, we set up a budget for \$90,000. It was knocked down, it was cut, but this is necessary. What can you do about it. I could see some of the problems coming back to the Task Force. They don't say: Listen, you cut the money, what are you going to do about it? No, I don't hear it.

Mr. Soria: We have. We brought it to the attention of the Board many times. We did, and I was there myself. We talked especially about the training that the employees need. Never nothing was done about it. That is one. Number two: I repeat this again to you: that if you don't have the employees and if you cannot afford it, with the program that you have right now you can't handle it thoroughly. How can you handle a program if you are not going to have staff or nothing to do this job?

Mrs. Gist: Can you say anything about the training?

Mr. Curtis: As a person who is dealing with poverty, or dealing with people, if you really examine the programs out there, it was distinctly felt that the great society was not giving away a damn thing. They were given money for administration and you made the program worst. Nobody has enough money to do what they want to do or do what is needed. Again, what you are saying is true. You can't effectively handle a program if you have to cut personnel. The same thing happened to us. The same thing happens every year. We have to let people go because of lack of funds. Every year since we have been in existence there have been lay-offs. We have had to ask people to work for nothing until we get funding.

Mr. Rubiani: Casa Program is one of the problems, but let's skip it. We can deal with that later on.

Mr. Soria: Now, getting back to the issues I was going along, take for instance right now, you were saying that it is true that without a staff you cannot run a

program. Now, in the meantime, there are vacancies in the Paterson Task Force that should be taken care of. People should be hired up for these positions and they have not done it, and I am aware of this and the Board should be aware of this.

Mr. Curtis and Mrs. Gist: Which vacancies are these?

Mr. Soria: He doesn't know and he is a Board member. How do you like it? You see? This is one of our main issues.

Mr. Wilkes: There are people there who want to be paid and they are angry because they have not been paid. We were given the understanding that the meeting was called to see if we can negotiate a part of the settlement that will expedite this process. I understand also that the majority of these people are people who are just trying to get out of the ranks of poverty. There are people who need their checks and if they don't have their checks they are in trouble. I am ready now to deal with one of the three issues, where and how it can be.....(interruption),

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Mr. Torres: I have a number of points. Now if we are going to speak about negotiating, I am just going to read them off and we can take them point by point or set up another meeting. In the first place: re-organization of the Board of Directors of the Paterson Task Force. In other words, new elections for a new Board. Information will be disseminated into the community so that people will know what is going on and this time there will be equal representation, you know, in terms of members of the Board of Directors. That is point one. Okay, then, point two, establishment of that delegate agency that we were talking about. Incor-

porating and setting up a delegate agency. Okay? But setting up some proportion now, we got to figure out, you know, in proposals that are written for Paterson Task Force, that it mention that so many Blacks are being served and so many Puerto Ricans are being served, but bringing out what the proportion of Puerto Ricans that are being served is, and relating that to the amount of money that would go up to that portion of Puerto Ricans for that program, say, one third, of all those programs or funds, would go to that delegate agency. And they will work with this to set up their programs. And they would have delegate agencies in turn but they would be functioning through Paterson Task Force and then there will be no strings attached in terms of implementation of programs. If this agency decides that they want to set up some sort of program and if the funds were there, okay, taking into consideration the funds are there. Then they would go right ahead. No one has any right to say that this program should be changed or should be run this way, except the Board of Directors of that delegate agency. Then, the fourth point I want to make is decentralization of the Federation of Neighborhood Councils, specifically dealing with Area 5, in the Puerto Rican neighborhood. Maybe we can work around that, but this is more or less what we are aiming at: Little or no interference from Paterson Task Force.

Mr. Amilcar Velez: In relation with that, not only re-organization of the Paterson Task Force Board of Directors, so we have some saying over there, but also in the staff of the Paterson Task Force, so that we will have a carry over from what we will then get into the actual implementation of the program, that is, there are positions available that should be filled by Puerto Ricans. There should be at least one third of Puerto Ricans in the staff of the Paterson Task Force.

Mr. Rivera: I think I have to say this: Any kind of delegate agency status..... I don't think we have any neighborhood that is 100% Puerto Rican, but the essence of this is that if there is a delegate agency status set-up, it is to deal with the poverty of that particular community. Now, if it is 60, 40, 70, 30 or whatever happen it to be, to deal with the poverty, I don't think we really are in a situation in this region to create a thoroughly Puerto Rican agency to deal with Puerto Ricans. However, I think that a delegate agency the way it works -and I have seen it work- it is to work with poverty in that community and to deal with that. And if we deal with that intelligently in the Paterson Task Force I think that could be resolved. I think that is what we are talking about. I think that is what we are talking about. I think that is the essence of what we are talking about.

Mr. Morales: I think that the essence of what we are talking about is more than this. The gentlemen here mentioned to maintain a balance. I don't think there is any balance to maintain, because there have never been anything that could even come close to a balance. No. Out of the 52 members of the Paterson Task Force Board you have three Puerto Ricans.

Mr. Wilkes: How many Puerto Ricans are in the Board of Directors?

Mr. Morales: Three Puerto Ricans, which I know personally, they come out of Area 5. The other point is that there are no persons in the whole program in any key positions. That's another thing that I, as the Director of the Center -which could perhaps be considered as the second highest Puerto Rican position-. I have been asked many times why doesn't the Puerto Rican community participate and I answered

that question in front of the Board and I am going to answer that question now right here. And the reason is that if there isn't anybody working there to reach these people, how are they going to know? Who is going to reach them? Alright? Can you reach them with a token Puerto Rican Director in the whole Neighborhood Councils? Can you reach them with one Puerto Rican in each Center, one token Puerto Rican? Can you reach them with the token Puerto Ricans that work in the central office of the Paterson Task Force?

Mr. Wilkes: The items of negotiation are going out of the table. I think the idea was the delegate agency status and it seems to me that one of the things that we also stated something like 1/3 of the agency slots and the idea of Puerto Rican being given priority in key staff positions, as well as the re-organization of the Board. Of course, the delegate agency, the Board, and the staff. I think these were the major points.

Mr. Soria: Would you straight these out?

Mr. Wilkes: I heard this evening that Casa is a separate question than that purpose of a delegate agency. It seems more effective to deal with problems of the Puerto Rican poverty community and in dealing with the total asset of the P.T.F. then you have to consider Casa because that is part of the asset of P.T.F., so if you are going to start dividing these assets, united for specific purpose, then you have to consider Casa and now, when you exclude Casa, are you still talking about the same kind of percentage, are you talking about one delegate agency, or are you talking about two delegate agencies.

Mr. Soria: Mr. Wilkes, you can even if you want to, if you are going to refer to personnel, if you wish to protect yourself a little better, or anybody here, you could even leave Casa off. Look up the personnel of the whole community action of the city of Paterson and see how much personnel you have and see how many of those are Black, Puerto Rican or White, if you want to figure it out just Task Force you would be better off if you decide that you know yourself that either way you are still in the bottom.

Mr. Torres: Casa problem is not a community problem. Casa problem is a problem of PTF and OEO. If Casa is not doing what it is supposed to be doing, I think it is up to PTF or OEO to do something about Casa. Casa is one of the things that should be investigated, to see if the funds are being well used or what, you know.

Mr. Wilkes: That is taking a certain kind of assumption. You say the agency is doing very little which is not very true because I think the agency is filling its purpose. But whether or not, this is not the issue.....we are not going to take a look at the agency.....let's take a look to all these programs.....maybe we are willing to cut out something.....

Mr. Rivera: We have here a situation to deal with. The delegate agency. I think we can formulate that and I think we have people of good faith to deal with, but I would like you to come out with a resolution. Let's take a swing at the ball

going in that direction, trying to hit that target. You can specify polishing up and make it complete at another meeting, but at this point I would like to get some consensus because we are running out of time and I really think we are making this into a situation out there in the street that none of us want.

Mr. Diaz: Suppose that this delegate agency has been established and Casa is still part of the Paterson Task Force. Will it become part of the delegate agency that is going to be established, or stay in the Paterson Task Force?

(There is much confused talk here).

Mrs. Gist: Are we all clear that there cannot be a delegate agency?

Mr. Rivera: There cannot be another CAP Agency, but there can be a delegate agency.

Mrs. Gist: You were saying a separate delegate agency with nothing attached to Task Force.

Mr. Diaz: Does that delegate agency have to channel their proposals.....

Mr. Pulaskos: There is a regular process that goes within the agency. You follow that. As I said initially it was.....if we implement the necessary considerations with the PTF you won't get what you can't have.

Mr. Diaz: Does this delegate agency after they channel their proposals through the CAP Agency -that at this point is the PTF- do this delegate agency have the right and privilege to see that their proposals are channeled in the way that they want it to?

Mr. Rivera: Yes, that delegate agency proposal goes through Task Force. The Task Force may say to the delegate agency: "Those guys of OEO, Washington, say they would like this form filed out this way and they have a better chance!.....or whatever they may have to say. Then, there is a resource to the delegate agency and finally there is a delegate agency contract which is handled out through PTF and the delegate agency acts on that contract. You spell out, you know, what authorities the.....

Mr. Torres: Now this is the contact and this is really up. Do you have guidelines that say what I would like to know?

Mr. Morales: The issue that is connected with that is that we do not have a meaningful participation in that Board of the Paterson Task Force and implement what the PTF decides. This delegate agency is going to run through all kinds of problems, as we have now, not having participation in that Board.

Mr. Velez: Let's get together on the issue of the Board of Directors.

Mr. Torres: Why don't we sit down among ourselves and then we concur as a group, and as a group we can sit down and discuss each of these things point by point. First,

we have to have some sort of understanding among ourselves.

Mr. Soria: Let me inform you something. I just got a phone call a few minutes ago. We got only until 8 o'clock and I mean it. We better make some decision here. Otherwise something is going to happen down there.

Mr. Rivera: That's right. Let's deal with this.

Mr. Soria: I tell you for your own good. Okay? We better do it in the next 15 minutes. We better do it. A delegate agency we should have through the Task Force with the condition that they have more Puerto Rican membership in the Board, in order that those contracts may be negotiable and OEO sees them.

Mr. Rivera: Do you want me to participate in helping setting this?

O.K.